

## Appendix C: Centers Q & As

### **BRONX GRAIL CENTER**

We have different Works – some just the Bronx Grail, some in conjunction with St. Luke's Church, some with other Grail Networks.

#### WOMEN

- Monthly meeting
- Mutual support
- Personal growth
- Social awareness
- Spiritual journey
- Collection each meeting...given to international Grail projects (ex. Mocambique, Uganda, etc.), used for celebrations, given to groups/causes outside the Grail (ex. Pastors for Peace, Sr Ana who sleeps on the streets and ministers to the homeless) and financial support when members want to attend programs Grail or otherwise

#### LA AVENTURA

Connected with our Women's Group as well as Women of the Americas. It began as a practical outgrowth of Phase I of Overcoming Poverty workshop organized by Women of Americas.

- Micro-economic project of selling clothes. However many women work on a given day, the money is divided equally amongst them with an equal part going back to the project.
- Leadership training
- Project monies are used: buy industrial sewing machine, help some members who had emergency travel to their home country, help with program fees, trips

#### GIRLS...Girls 9 to 11

- Series of three 6 week sessions
- Focus: environment, global issues, personal growth
- Always a spiritual aspect included

#### GIRLS...High school

- UN involvement, especially CSW and UN Youth Days
- WGG-UN connection
- Conscious exposure to/involvement with the Grail
- Leadership training

#### HOSPITALITY is offered to

- Grail members from other USA cities and from other countries.
- Friends and family of Grail members
- UN participants who can't afford hotels – people who share our vision and mission
- Transitional housing for select people (i.e. we are not usually open to people walking in off the street)
- New York Metro for meetings on occasion

#### ENVIRONMENT

- Community garden
- CSA

#### WOMEN OF THE AMERICAS

- Rooted in local immigrant community
- Outreach to younger women

#### CSW...Commission on the Status of Women

- Outreach to women
- Make it possible for girls to attend
- Low cost place to stay for international participants
- Connected with Grail/UFER Linkage to the United Nations

#### **Bronx Grail House Mission Statement:**

To provide an environment where women empower women in developing leadership, transforming their communities, and building solidarity through their spirituality, personal growth and community action.

#### **GOALS FOR CLOTHES FOR COMMUNITY**

1. To develop an income-producing project based on sales of donated clothing and managed by community women.
2. To learn the necessary skills needed for a micro-economic project such as record keeping, profit distribution, pricing of items.
3. To partner with other community groups in exchange of services that would be mutually beneficial to all.
4. To become knowledgeable of existing community services and be able to make appropriate referrals.
5. To be a building block in the overall community planning of the Mott Haven Neighborhood.

A few comments from our group's discussion of the questions provided by the Council:

1. after last year, trying to meet every other month and then missing that sometimes, all decided they wanted to meet monthly. These meetings are a great source of support for all.
2. heart of our work: work with the girls, clothes project, hospitality.
3. need to be more connected with other Grail members in the area.
4. assumptions and myths: the Grail House will always be there.....Sharon and Mary Kay will always be there.

## **CORNWALL Q & A**

### **1. What is the “heart of the matter” for you and your staff and/or volunteers, as you play a leadership role at Cornwall, that you think Grail members would like to know?**

For more than thirty years, living and working in Grail community has been at the heart of the Cornwall mission. As we go through changes in the way we express and extend our community, we remain committed to this as the ground from which all our action springs. Our actions are “project” rather than “program” based, designed for developing on-going works and relationships that both reflect and sustain the life of the Grail.

### **2. Name three things you and your staff and/or volunteers are most proud of related to your work at Cornwall?**

- Following a long and difficult transition, stabilization is well underway in terms of organization, staff, accountability, finances, and residential community
- Start-up of Metanoia Process
- Increased working relationship with local community

### **3. What are some common assumptions that we need to test when we think about Cornwall?**

- The assumption that sufficient resources presently exist to provide hospitality to visitors as was previously possible (see “The Myth of The Fairy Godmothers” below)
- The assumption that the Center will be able to generate enough income to cover ALL its expenses
- The assumption that “programs” (i.e. disparate thematic events) are effective ways of generating income or doing outreach

### **4. What are three myths about Cornwall, which you think should be dispelled?**

- The myth of “The Fairy Godmothers,” i.e. the presence of nurturing caretakers who are always available for hospitality and relational needs. Connected to this is the myth that the beauties and delights of community life are boundless and never-ending
- Assorted myths about what a Grail community – and therefore what Cornwall – should be
- The myth that Cornwall is an isolated, self-contained “unit”

### **5. What are you and your staff’s greatest hopes for Cornwall?**

- To be an oasis for spiritual deepening and radical transformation
- To rebuild a Grail community – residentially, locally, and regionally based – that can sustain the life and work of the Center for a new generation
- To be a place of collaborative work with local, regional, and national Grail members and friends
- To provide a space for women who are spiritual/social/environmental activists to network and initiate projects for change
- To use all our resources – people, land, buildings, and finances – in a sustainable way
- To continue covering operational expenses and develop a financial plan for funding the future
- To live a life that is attractive and compelling enough that young women will want to join us
- To be a work that is worthwhile and compelling enough that people will be eager to support us

### **6. What are some dilemmas/opportunities in your specific situation at Cornwall?**

#### **Dilemmas:**

- How to function as an organization while preserving our life as a community
- How to balance personal needs with community needs
- As middle aged and older women, how to attract younger women to be part of us
- How to accommodate a new generation of residential staff – with contemporary life style needs – given our present housing

**Opportunities:**

- To create an action network of women of diverse spiritual paths from our client base of groups who return to the Phoenix year after year and with whom we have developed personal relationships – conversations already begun in this direction, inspired by WIST programs and UN connections
- To continue supporting local women as they implement Grail programming projects, e.g., Wellness Weekend and Teen programs presently being organized by local friends as developmental series on which on-going relationships can be built
- One young woman presently living at the Center is attempting to attract other young women to join her in living and working here on a land-based project; she is also initiating meetings of young, former Cornwall residents in NYC
- A network is emerging that includes a Cornwall Village food co-op (presently in development) and local organic community gardens, including the Grail Garden Partners project
- A large number of artists in a variety of media are attracted to living, working, or being involved with us – an opportunity for projects yet to be developed
- Forty-five acres of land

**7. What kind of support do you feel from Grail members?**

We feel support at every level – through donations, response to Metanoia, affirmation of our present ways of operating, increasing involvement in responsibility for implementing programs they are participating in (e.g. Metanoia, Politics and Spirituality retreats)

**8. What kind of support do you need from Grail members?**

More of the same. Plus:

- help in recruiting clients for Retreat Center rentals (through their networks and associations) as well as helping us to find short and long-term residents
- more availability to donate their skills for accomplishing specific tasks; e.g. marketing, website, database, fundraising, buildings and grounds
- more availability to assist on working committees, or to spend some time here in residence

**9. If you could change one thing about Cornwall, what would it be? What would it take to create the change you have in mind?**

To build a future long-term residential community it is absolutely necessary to have additional housing that accommodates a variety of lifestyles. To create this housing would no doubt entail some of the steps that have been part of Grailville's ecovillage process.

**10. What else would you like to say?**

As we walk the fine line between “community” and “organization,” it often seems that Cornwall functions best as a “family business.” As a relatively small operation with irregular hours and varying needs, with a mix of paid and unpaid staff along with enthusiastic volunteers, the usual distinctions seem not to apply. All of our staff and volunteers have defined responsibilities executed under clear lines of accountability. In the day-to-day of getting The Work done, everyone – regardless of their “title” or job description – pitches in, in the times and ways in which she or he is needed and available. From washing the dishes to answering the phone, from emptying the compost to balancing the books, from taking down a dead tree to stacking the wood, all of us are engaged in the daily effort of keeping Cornwall viable and afloat. All of our staff and volunteers feel a commitment to the spirit and mission of this place. All of us feel a sense of loyalty to the relational ties that bind us to each other. All of us try to do what needs to be done, even when it extends outside the boundaries of our usual hours and defined tasks. We work together and make accommodations (dare I say sacrifices?) as any “family” would, believing deeply, and having a personal stake, in the success of our shared venture. While it does not fit neatly into a 9-5 paradigm, I am finding this flexible way of operating as an organization more conducive to financial viability while at the same time truer to our communal intent.

## **GRAILVILLE Q & A**

1. **What is the “heart of the matter” for you and your staff and/or volunteers, as you play a leadership role at Grailville, that you think Grail members would like to know?**
  - We all love Grailville and are working together really well.
  - Grailville leadership and staff are hard at work on following the directions set by our comprehensive planning work in 2007. We have set priorities for our work in facilities, land, finance and programming and are following through on tasks, both large and small.
  - Progress sometimes feels slow (other times not so much!) but it is evident, and we feel good about it!
2. **Name three things you and your staff and/or volunteers are most proud of related to your work at Grailville?**
  - The increasing number of successful mission-based programs we present.
  - Our slow but sure improvements to buildings, grounds and our farming partnerships.
  - The ‘good vibe’ about the place.
3. **What are some common assumptions that we need to test when we think about Grailville?**
  - Some people assume that the retreat center is a business for the purpose of supporting the mission work at Grailville. In fact, Grailville leadership sees the retreat center as an important part of carrying out the mission of the Grail at Grailville.
  - Some people assume that decisions about Grailville are best addressed through a deficit framework, “let’s look at what we don’t have (not enough resources, programs, people, etc.) and try to fill it.” In reality, while filling gaps is necessary, careful discernment about what we do with what we have is proving to be a more useful strategy.
  - Some people assume that if a Grailville program is not envisioned and led by a Grail member it is not a Grail program. In reality, all Grailville programs are developed and facilitated based on the values of the Grail.
4. **What are three myths about Grailville, which you think should be dispelled?**
  - It is a myth that many people are dissatisfied with Grailville. In fact, guest and participant surveys and staff evaluations show us the opposite. Staff and guests value Grailville and feel good about the direction we are heading, even while acknowledging concerns.
  - It is a myth that nothing much is happening at Grailville. In fact, Grailville is a pretty busy place these days, with guests, programs and the ongoing work of stewarding Grail resources here at Grailville.
  - There is mythology around the subject of farming at Grailville: that the purpose of Grailville has until recently been a working farm or, conversely, that no farming happens at Grailville. The truth is much more complicated; the farm life of Grailville has gone in cycles for many years and the current cycle of farming partnerships grows out of past learnings and relationships.
5. **What are you and your staff’s greatest hopes for Grailville?**
  - We hope to support becoming the kind of Grailville we want to be (with simple, comfortable, green buildings and staff with reasonable work responsibilities and adequate compensation) by increasing retreat center business and fundraising to pay for increased staffing and capital improvements.
  - We hope that Grailville’s reputation as a beautiful, peaceful, sacred place with exciting programs and organic agriculture continues to grow.
6. **What are some dilemmas/opportunities in your specific situation at Grailville?**
  - A major investment of resources will be necessary for the ongoing health of Grailville’s physical plant. Funding from foundations and major donors are presently untapped

resources and are likely sources of capital funding. The Comprehensive Planning work we have done and continue to do lays the groundwork for a capital campaign.

- The current governance structure of the Grail and its centers makes a capital campaign more challenging (e.g., no clear Board structure makes foundation fundraising more difficult). The current Grail restructuring work comes at a critical time and is an opportunity to make governance decisions that more fully support centers' work.
- The rebuilding of Grailville after its subsistence year(s) has provided both challenges and opportunities. Challenges include trying to do more without significantly more resources with which to do it. Opportunities include careful, planned growth and the chance to recruit, support and work together with additional volunteers.
- Similarly, the redevelopment of programs and renewed attention to improvements to building and grounds bring gifts and challenges. Grail members and other supporters have been waiting so long for things to happen that it can be difficult to be patient, especially if the priorities of Grailville leadership are not the same as those of individual members. (E.g., why are they doing this program instead of that, fixing that building instead of another?)

#### **7. What kind of support do you feel from Grail members?**

- Grail members call, write or talk to us with their enthusiasm for various aspects of what we are doing.
- Grail members provide financial support for operating expenses or particular projects. Grail members provide ~50% of our donation income.
- Grail members (and their families) offer their talents, time and knowledge to Grailville programs and projects.
- Grail members participate in Grailville programs and invite their friends and family.
- All of these things are wonderful and much appreciated!

#### **8. What kind of support do you need from Grail members?**

- A willingness to let the process continue to unfold at Grailville, in trust that what is emerging will be good (and Grail), even if it isn't exactly what you would do.
- Spreading the word about our programs and our retreat center services – bring or send us paying guests! We need you to forward our emails, hand out our written material, attend activities with family and friends and generally be our ambassadors with everyone you know.
- Continued (and increased) financial support.
- Remember that we are trying to do a lot with a little and while we wish we could do more and do it better, as we grow it is important to affirm, and even celebrate, all the ways in which we are “good enough.”

#### **9. If you could change one thing about Grailville, what would it be? What would it take to create the change you have in mind?**

- We believe Grailville is moving in the right direction, and while we would like to move further, faster, there is no “one thing” of those mentioned above that takes priority over another.

#### **10. What else would you like to say?**

- We want Grail members to understand that we are planning, working, moving ahead and feeling good about what we are doing. We want you to feel proud of this place and enthusiastically participate and support us however you can.
- Please understand that the decisions the membership makes about ‘The Grail’ will affect Grailville as well – that the Grail community also needs to include a functioning governance structure which is able to support the operations of complicated, diverse Centers.